

10

Writing about Data and Methods

SOLUTIONS

1. List what information you would report in a data section for a scientific paper.
 - a. When, where, who (demographic characteristics) was studied? How were they recruited? What was the baseline response rate among recruits? What percentage of the initial sample was lost-to-follow up and how? How did the sample compare demographically to all clients at that rehab center? How were “cure” and “relapse” defined and measured? By whom were these assessments made?
 - b. Again, the Ws. How were they recruited, what was the response rate, and how did the sample compare to all pregnant women? Were they asked specifically about calcium intake or to list foods? Open- or closed-ended questions about food?
3. Loss-to-follow-up, how income data were collected (total or by components; in what ranges? continuous or categorical?)
5. Write a short discussion of strengths and limitations for the concluding section of a general interest newspaper article.
 - a. “The findings from this study are probably of little use for the average Gap store. Because the data were collected during the school year on a weekday at an exclusive golf club, the opinions represent principally those of relatively affluent, nonworking adults—a fairly small share of the Gap market. Future studies should sample younger persons of both genders from a range of income and employment groups, as well as students—the groups that comprise the more usual target audience.”
 - b. “Strengths of this study include its longitudinal nature, with testing both before and after adoption of the new curriculum in schools with each type of curriculum. However, it isn’t clear whether random assignment was used to decide which schools followed which curriculum, or whether school districts made their own choices of curriculum. In addition, possible differences in socioeconomic, demographic, and educational characteristics that might explain observed differences across schools or changes across time were not included.”
 - c. “This study demonstrates that the association between hair color and mortality is spurious, being completely explained by their mutual association with age. Strengths of the study include the large sample size and the wide range of ages and hair colors represented, allowing their association to be observed.” (See chapter 3 for an explanation of this topic.)